THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Mumbai and Delhi airports are being restructured and modernized through Joint Venture (JV) route.

(b) A time period of eight months has been targeted to complete the transaction for restructuring and modernizing the two airports.

(c) and (d) Representatives of the recognized Union and Officers' Associations have formed AAI Employees Joint Forum. The Forum held relay hunger strikes and demonstrations at various airports in the country during the period from 19.07.2004 to 22.07.2004 and protested against the proposed restructuring of Mumbai and Delhi airports. The Forum have deferred their agitational programme after the management of AAI agreed to hold frequent discussions with the representatives of the Forum on various developments.

Shifting of Patna airport

†2093. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that direct Airbus facility between Patna and New Delhi is not available every year from the month of April to August due to relatively shorter length of runway at Patna Airport;

(b) if so, the solution thereof and the action taken by Government so far to solve this problem, and

(c) whether Government are considering to shift the airport at Patna to Bihata or elsewhere as an alternative measure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) In the past Indian Airlines operated a daily A-320 service on Mumbai-Delhi-Patna-Ranchi and *vice-versa* route. But in summers due to high temperature coupled with limitation of shorter runway at Patna, Indian Airlines was constrained to change the above routing of the flight to Mumbai-Delhi-Ranchi-Patna and *vice-versa* as it involved load penalty.

(b) Airports Authority of India has acquired land from State Govt. and Indian Railways for restoring runway strip width to required standard. This exercise is likely to be completed during current financial year. The runway

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

length will increase marginally which will help to operate A-320 type of aircraft with reduced load penalty. Besides, Indian Airlines has introduced a new daily morning A-320 service on Delhi-Patna-Delhi route *w.e.f.* 4th August, 2004.

(c) Due to development constraints on the expansion of the existing Patna airport, there was a proposal under consideration to shift operations to Bihata airfield. The proposal has been kept in abeyance due to the project not being viable.

Pension to retired AI employees

2094. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India employees, who had retired a decade ago, are yet to receive their pension;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) The Government had approved the Air India Employees' Self Contributory Superannuation Pension Scheme effective from 1st April, 1994, only for those employees who were in active service of the Company as on 1st April, 1994. The scheme was introduced in 1996 effective 1st April, 1994. Employees who have retired before 1st April 1994 are not entitled to receive pension.

Open Sky Pact between India and USA

2095. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and USA are working out open sky pact;

(b) if so, whether US Asstt. Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs had serious discussions with regard to adoption of an open sky agreement between USA and India;

(c) whether US carriers are very interested in India and looking at potential destination;